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MEL BLANC

If you grew up watching Warner Brother's cartoons like I did, you spent a lot of time admiring the versatility or Melvin Jerome Blanc, the man with a thousand voices. Born May 30, 1908, the son of Frederick Blank and Estelle Rosenbaum, Mel started his career as the voice of the drunken bull in PICADOR PORKY in 1937. It was his idea to record all of the characters' voices separately and have the film editor splice it all together; before Mel, they were doing it in sequence, a process which took days. While most of the directors at Warner's have taken credit for Bugs Bunny at one time or another, it was Mel's voice and mannerisms that established the personality of the hare in the public mind. I doubt that anyone would argue that Blanc's contribution to the cartoons is a major one, but it's clear from his autobiography, *THAT'S NOT ALL FOLKS* (Warner Books, 1988), that he feels neglected. It's not that his work has gone unappreciated; actually, I knew who he was long before I knew anything about the men who animated the cartoons, mainly because he was always given credit for his work on Jack Benny's radio show.

Born in a wood-frame house near Bush and Divisadero in San Francisco, Mel started doing voices when he was a kid. Radio gave him his break and from there he went into the cartoons, becoming the voices of Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tweety and Sylvester, Yosemite Sam, and literally thousands of other characters.

Blanc did all of the voices in the cartoons, certainly an amazing achievement by any standards. He did work for Disney at one point, doing the drunken cat, Gideon, in PINOCCHIO, but most of his dialogue was taken out in the final cut, because the cat was too drunk. One hiccup remained. That was Mel's moment in PINOCCHIO.

His autobiography adds a lot of information to the field of animation and even those who are not that interested in the cartoon business will find Mel's memories of working with Jack Benny and other radio stars fascinating. C. G.

COMIX FLUGOLA

EL VIBORA 103 and 104 \$8 ea. from Jose M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3.08003, Barcelona, Spain.* CEREBUS 114 begins the Jaka Story. Aardvark Vanaheim. WEIRDO 23 tells you more about Bob and Aline Crumb at home.* BLAB 3 is a paperback book from Kitchen Sink, edited by Monte Beauchamp. It features comments by various underground cartoonists re Robert Crumb and his influence on their lives.



Horny hussies will get all shook up when they check out the buge on this dude! Debbie Mersley has a hunka hunka burnin' love that just won't quit! If your idea of a good time involves a weekend in Vegas and a bottle of Nembutal, this is the kingly conqueror you've been waiting for!

Great caricatures by Xno like this punk Elvis.* AIDS NEWS is

an educational comic from People of Color Against AIDS Network, 814 NE 40th Street, Seattle, WA. 98105. Copies of the comic are available for a donation of \$1-10.* The Pander Brothers, who did those great issues of GRENDAL are now illustrating a GINGER FOX mini-series for Comico. BLOODSCENT by Dean Allen Schreck has been drawn by Gene Colan and reminds me of his great work in the TOMB OF DRACULA series back in the early seventies. JEZEBEL JADE is a new adventure series with illos by Adam Kubert. *Steve Lafler has illustrated Stephen Beaupre's DUCK & COVER 1. \$2.73 PP from 293-A Mather St., Oakland, CA 94611. Eternity is re-running some of the old Sally The Sleuth stories from 1941 in SPICY TALES. Sally influenced Harvey Kurtzman's LITTLE ANNIE FANNY. Simple formula. Sally or Annie had to be undressed most of the story and the artists were kept busy devising motives and opportunities.* My favorite animal comic, USAGI YOJIMBO is up to #13 and the stories are still strong. A hand for Stan Sakai.* Bob Sheridan has some new zines out: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE CLEVELAND BAR SCENE is \$2.25 pp. THE ANTI-ARTIST 5, DRONES, AND MR. CROSS-HATCH are 50¢/stamp each. 10922 Fortune Ave., Cleveland, OH 44111.*

Eric Vincent is working on TWILIGHT MAN for First Comics. * For \$3.50 pp you can get a copy of Mary Fleener's HOODOO. 309 Oceanview, Encinitas, CA 92024.* DISTORTED FEATURES 4 is 50¢/Stamp from Mike Morris, POB 4687, Portland, ORE 97208-4687. * FRAGMENTS 1 is 25¢/stamp from Ben Lord, 818 21st St, #D, Santa Monica, CA 90403.* MISC 27 is \$2.50 pp from Randy Paske, 656 Birch Ln. Gilbert, MN 55741-9631.* BABYFAT 61 is 50¢/Stamp from CW. Single panel contributions welcome for future issues.* UNDERGROUND SURREALIST 4 is \$2.85 pp from Mick Cusimano, POB 2565, Cambridge, MA 02238.* SCREEN DUMPS 4 is \$1.25 pp from Jerry Riddle, 4126 San Roberto #2, Anchorage, AK 99508-2862.* Send an SASE to Dolphin Moon, POB 22262, Baltimore, MD 21203 for their latest listing of comic publications.*

I read Harlan Ellison's article re comics in the December **PLAYBOY** and that same evening I saw him on television selling cars. Both upset me. I've always respected Ellison as a writer and enjoyed his criticism, but when I read that revisionist comics article I wondered what country I lived in. An article on contemporary comics that doesn't even mention Robert Crumb? One about alternative comics that ignores the work of Mike Friedrich? The black and white comics being published today are a direct result of Crumb's 1967 breakthrough with ZAP and Mike Friedrich's transitional work with Star*Reach in the early seventies. It was Crumb who proved that an artist could draw and publish his own comic outside of New York, retain his copyright and his original artwork. Though Crumb subsequently published his work with various companies, he still retained his own copyright and artwork. This is what Mike Friedrich saw when he founded his Star*Reach Productions and it was artistic control and independence which he used to sell his concept to people like Frank Brunner, Craig Russell, Lee Marrs, and others. Why Ellison ignores the underground and what Friedrich called his 'ground-level' comics puzzles me. He knows the true history as well as I do. He has done work for companies like Last-Gasp Comix, so we can only assume that the exclusion of the underground from his article was a deliberate revision of the true history of comics as they evolved during the sixties and seventies.

It's interesting to me that the artists who are best thought of today, those doing the most innovative work in the overground or Eastern comics, would never have been able to write and draw what they are drawing had it not been for the pioneer work done by Crumb, Shelton, Corben, Holmes, and numerous others who proved the possibility of alternative comics. Yet I seldom hear these people give credit where it is due. Anyone who thinks DC would have accepted something like Frank Miller's version of Batman pre-Crumb is a social cretin and needs to review the history of the sixties and seventies. Michael Friedrich, Frank Brunner, Jim Starlin,

Steve Engelhart, and other overground writers and artists came to our Berkeley Underground Comix Convention back in 1974 and they saw the control ug artists had taken over their work. It was the continued success of underground companies that stimulated the formation of companies like Pacific, First, Comico, and the dozens of others now on the scene. Had the artists accepted some social and political censorship, the underground comix would have gained wider distribution, but most ug artists refused to restrain themselves and opted for a more limited readership. By doing so, they opened the door for companies that would produce watered down versions of underground comix, books that could be sold in the comic stores throughout the country. Undergrounds were often berated for their sex and violence, but what was lost in those discussions was their political outlook. It was the anti-establishment attitude that was suppressed by the protectors of suburban America. If you doubt this, why is **THE KILLING JOKE** on sale in the shopping malls? Sadistic sex and violence is the essence of that story, and the message is lost in the shuffle. The covert fetishism of the thirties and forties is overt in the straight comics of the late eighties. DC saw this as the essence of the undergrounds and assimilated it sans the politics which were the real guts of those early seventies books.

Since it takes millions of dollars of advertising to keep anything in the public eye in this country, you should expect to see a lot more revisionist history in the coming years. It is not in the interest of the establishment to let you know anything about the underground that evolved in the seventies. Books about what happened are few and far between, and their viewpoint is well controlled as anyone who has read Tom Hayden's 'biography' well knows.

But Harlan Ellison pandering to **PLAYBOY** and selling cars on tv. Oy vey. Can it be he has forgotten his articles in the old Los Angeles **FREE PRESS**? Has the enfant terrible of science fiction, the master of insult and invective, finally sold his soul?

I loved the extra-long Batman newsletter. It wasn't your typical 'fannish' article, that's for sure, but a kind of critical look that sort of character isn't used to getting. I judge things by different standards, like tv versus movies, or comic books versus novels, or even (God forbid) real life. I don't read Batman anymore since they have tried to make him fit into the 'real world (or what passes for it)'. Since I'm a non-superhero person I don't get into any of that long underwear stuff, but I have fond memories of the old Bob Kane, Dick Sprang, Bill Finger Batman. It was silly stuff, done in a cartoony style, full of crazy plots and deus ex machina, but it had its own kind of bizarre logic and worked within that framework, and that's what I find missing in today's Batman. It's been worked over by too many artists and writers and no longer has that internal consistency that helped to suspend disbelief.

I used to like the giant props and the bits of business like the villains leaving clues with such obscure meanings that only Batman and Robin could figure them out. Even though the villains always failed they kept coming back. It was a weird family relationship, like trying to get Daddy's attention, or like continuing unsuccessful attempts to join an exclusive club or something. I never thought the character Superman ever achieved the same 'flair' that the 40s and 50s Batman had. Superman's non-appeal to me was the same reason Batman appealed to me... I could grow up to be Batman, but never Superman (not unless something magic happened to me).

The fans that worry about their character being ruined by a movie starring Michael Keaton don't seem to realize that there really is no way to play Batman straight. The Costume is too silly. In the old cartoony world of Bob Kane's Batman it didn't seem incongruous, but in the 'real life' world it would be a joke. A guy could not maneuver athletically in it, and a big guy with a long cape standing on a rooftop would be too good a target; that cape sure wouldn't stop a bullet. Also, anyone wearing the costume would be laughed off the street!

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